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# LGBTQ\* UK COVID-19 Lockdown 18-35 Experiences

First Survey (4 June to 6 August 2020)

Preliminary Results Released 18 September 2020

Marie Houghton & Fiona Tasker



# LGBTQ\* UK COVID-19 Lockdown 18-35 Experiences

Thanks for taking a look at this summary of the preliminary results from our LGBTQ\* UK COVID-19 Lockdown Experiences survey. This is the First Survey in a series of surveys and interview studies that we have planned in our international research project on LGBTQ\* adults' experiences of the coronavirus pandemic and associated restrictions. The findings we present are both concerning and intriguing. We hope you will find the results useful. Please note our preliminary results are based on n=345 replies and do not include the full sample of First Survey participants.

We plan to build upon our findings from the First Survey in our new Second Survey. You can read about the new Second Survey and keep in touch with further research developments on our website  
<https://lgbtq1835c19lockdown.wordpress.com/>

If you have any questions, would like to know more about the results, or would like to quote any of the material here, please do get in touch with us - Fiona Tasker ([f.tasker@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:f.tasker@bbk.ac.uk)) and Marie Houghton ([mhough01@mail.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:mhough01@mail.bbk.ac.uk)).



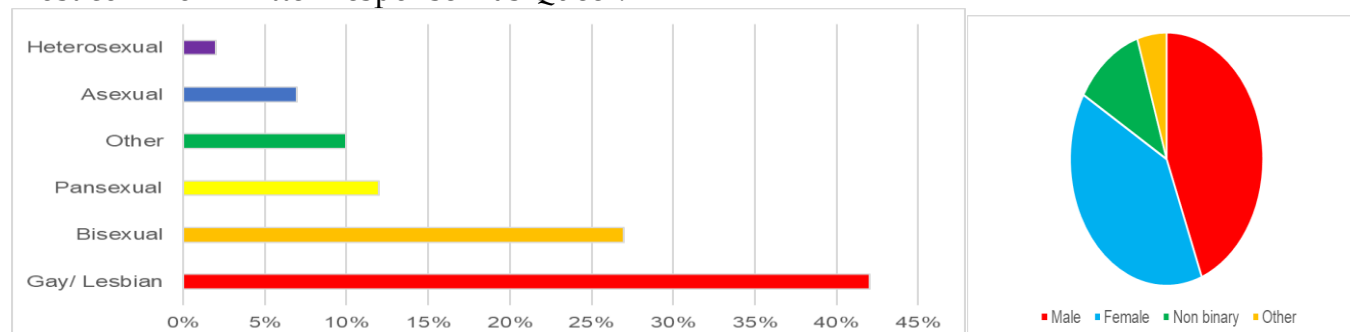
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## Who took part in the survey?

**Gender.** 44% of participants identified as male, 39% as female, 12% as non-binary, and 5% selected 'Other'.

**Transgender.** 21% of participants identified as transgender.

**Sexual identity.** 42% of participants identified as gay or lesbian, 27% identified as bisexual, and 12% identified as pansexual. 10% of participants selected 'Other' and wrote their preferred term for their sexual orientation. The most common written response was Queer.



**Age.** Just under 12% of participants were aged 18-20. The rest of the participants were then fairly evenly spread across the rest of the age range, with around 30% of participants being aged 21-25, 26-30, and 31-35 respectively.

**Educational qualifications.** 66% of participants had an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. 31% had achieved a further education qualification (such as an NVQ, apprenticeship or A-levels). 3% had achieved GCSEs or equivalent school leaving certificate.

**Disability or ongoing health problem.** Just over half (52%) of participants considered themselves to be disabled or to have an ongoing mental or physical health problem. Of those who did consider themselves to be disabled or to have an ongoing health problem: 79% reported that it affected daily life to some extent at least, 21% said it did not.



**Ethnicity.** As 94% of participants identified themselves as white in response to our survey question, BAME groups were under-represented in the First Survey. We want to reach out to invite more replies from BAME groups in our Second Survey.

**Nationality.** 88% of participants were British (or had dual-nationality that included British), 9% had an EU nationality and 3% were nationals of a non-EU country.

**Region and area of the UK.** All participants were based in the UK and we had respondents from every region of the UK, although the majority lived in England. The most represented regions were Greater London (21%), South East (12%), and East Midlands (12%). Northern Ireland was the region with the lowest number of participants with only 1% of participants being based there. The majority of participants lived in urban areas, with 55% of participants living in cities and 33% living in towns. 12% of participants live in rural areas.

## What happened when the pandemic happened and lockdown started?

### Personal experience of COVID-19

At the time of our survey (June and July 2020) only a small number of participants (2%) had received a positive diagnosis of COVID-19 but a further 14% reported experiencing some symptoms. Furthermore, 14% of participants said they had a family member or friend who had experienced COVID-19 symptoms.

### Impact of the pandemic

Nearly three-quarters of participants (72%) said that the pandemic had very much affected or totally affected their life. Less than 1% of participants said that the pandemic had not affected their life at all and only 2% of participants reported that they did not feel limited in carrying out their usual activities.



70% of First Survey respondents said they felt very limited or totally limited either by the pandemic itself or by lockdown and 70% felt very or extremely emotionally affected by the pandemic

Nearly all participants reported having been affected emotionally to some extent by the pandemic, with only 2% of participants reporting it had not affected them emotionally at all.

### Housing and living arrangements

Before lockdown the most common living arrangements that participants reported were living with a partner or partners (27% of participants) or living in a house share (27% of participants). A further 22% of participants reported living with one or both of their parents and 17% lived alone.

During pandemic the majority of participants (78%) had not changed where they lived during the lockdown but 22% moved. Of those participants who had changed where they lived, the majority had moved in with their parents. In total, 11% of participants had moved in with one or both of their parents during the lockdown. Other than parents, 3% of participants had moved in with their partner(s), 2% had moved into a shared house that they did not normally live in, and 1% had moved in with another family member who was not their parents.

Here are just a few of the many issues raised by survey participants (edited quotes):

*\* Lockdown has given me the time and space to think more deeply about my LGBTQ identity*

*\* My mental health worsening*

*\* Putting immigration / emigration / my wedding on hold*

*\* Struggling to access sexual health support*

*\* New people not making an effort to gender me correctly*

*\* Not getting my GIC appointment or hormones*

*\* Worry about queer places and safe havens closing*



## To what extent do you feel uncomfortable where you live? Or unable to express your LGBTQ\* identity?

The good news ... the majority of participants seemed to feel comfortable where they were currently living, with 50% of participants saying they either did not feel uncomfortable at all or felt only slightly uncomfortable. Likewise, over half of participants (58%) reported that they did not feel suffocated due to not being able to express their LGBTQ\* identity with the people they were living with.

Here are just a few of the many issues raised by survey participants (edited quotes):

*\* Being overheard because of needing to be online*

*\* Homophobic and / or transphobic abuse from my family (and others)*

*\* It's difficult to come out to people during lockdown (if someone reacts badly it's difficult to escape)*

*\* Problems with LGBTQ dating / Sex life in lockdown*

*\* Covid stopping the hugs in my life. Has been very sad*

*\* Made me want to volunteer more. I'm lucky to be in the position I'm in – other people aren't so fortunate*

But a sizeable minority said that where they lived was difficult. A quarter of survey participants (26%) reported feeling either very or extremely uncomfortable where they were living and a fifth of those taking part in the survey (19%) reported feeling very or completely suffocated due to not being able to express their LGBTQ\* identity where they were currently living.

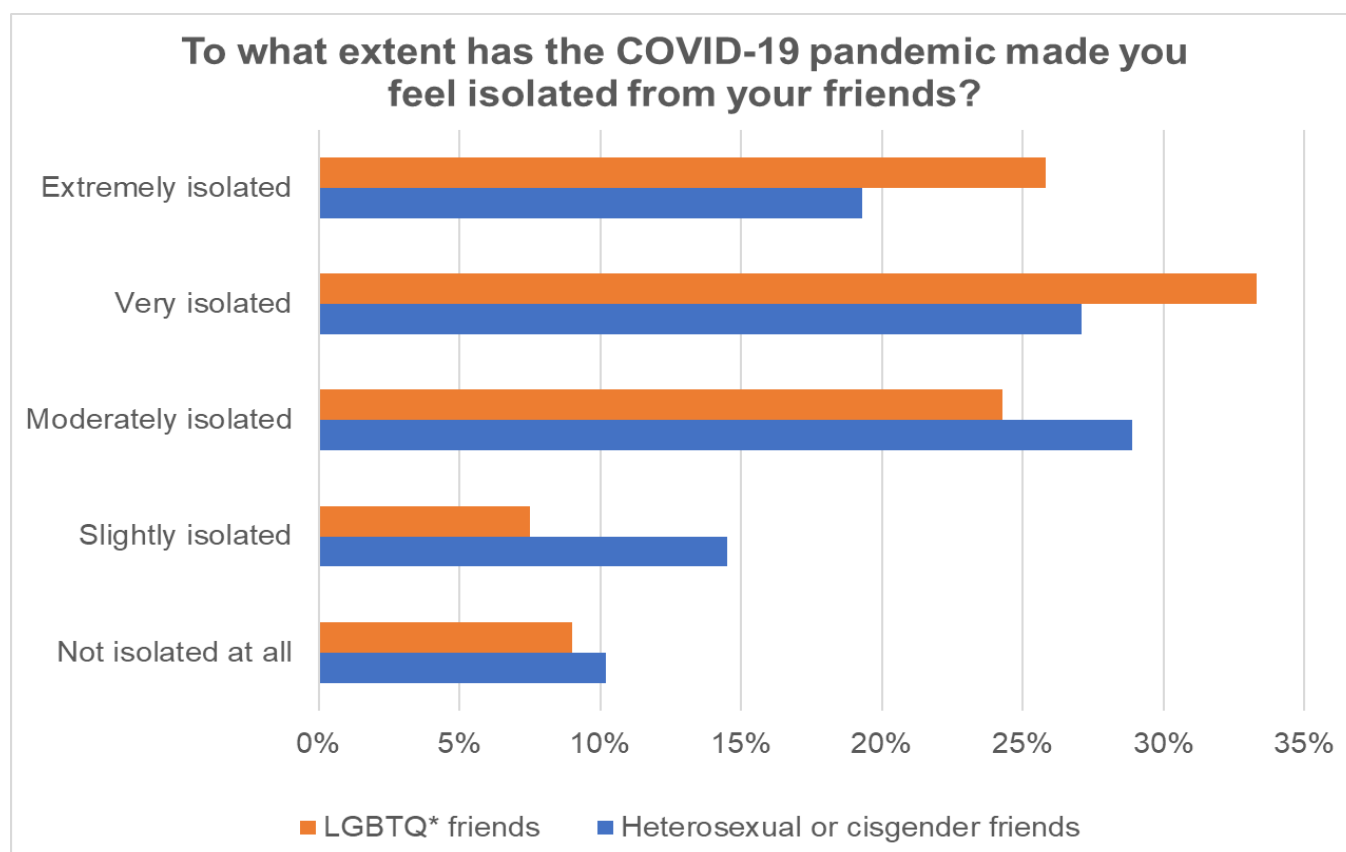


## Feeling isolated from friends and partners

For the most part, participants who were in relationships did not report feeling isolated from their partner(s) during the pandemic: 63% of participants reporting felt either not isolated at all or only slightly isolated from their partner(s) when they completed the survey. But 28% of participants in relationships did report feeling very or extremely isolated from their partner(s).

First Survey respondents reported feeling quite high levels of isolation from their support networks of friends during the pandemic. In particular, respondents reported feeling more isolated from LGBTQ\* friends than from heterosexual or cisgender friends. Nearly 60% of participants (59%) reported feeling very or extremely isolated from their LGBTQ\* friends compared to 46% of participants who reported feeling isolated from cisgender or heterosexual friends.

Nearly 60% of First Survey reported feeling very or extremely isolated from their LGBTQ\* friends



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*It's as if the world is suddenly experiencing  
the exact same existential crisis as me  
– and it feels long overdue*

*Survey Participant*

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## Summary and further research

Perhaps the most useful and striking data that we have are the many comments that participants left on the survey. In **our upcoming Second Survey** we have built upon the comments made in response to the First Survey. For example, widening our age range and question scope, introducing new focused items and removing ones that didn't work, re-designing and opening up multiple response answer options, and including more comment box space to reflect diversity. You can read about the design changes we have made on our website:

<https://lgbtq1835c19lockdown.wordpress.com/>

The comments left by First Survey participants on their pandemic experiences have given us rich results. From these comments we can start to appreciate the diversity within the LGBTQ\* community and also the variability of individual circumstances and personal responses to the pandemic and lockdown. Many of the comments on the survey, and the numerical findings detailed above, reveal the difficulties faced by people in LGBTQ\* communities. But we also can see strength and resilience as respondents wrote of their concern and caring for others who were more vulnerable both within the LGBTQ\* community and beyond.

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*We've used the time to create and foster queer community*

*Survey Participant*

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\* Some of the quotes presented here from survey respondents have been edited to remove potentially identifying information or shorten

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**Thank you to everyone who took part in the First Survey.**

**Please do get in touch with us – Fiona Tasker (f.tasker@bbk.ac.uk) and Marie Houghton (mhough01@mail.bbk.ac.uk) – if you have any questions, would like to know more about the results, or would like to quote any of the material here.**

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